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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PC-01 AID-05 IGA-02 CIAE-00 INR-07
NSAE-00 ARAE-00 /026 W
----------142055Z 028586 /73
P 142000Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4407

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 1197

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, JM, EAID, PFOR
SUBJECT: PEACE CORPS, JAMAICA

REF: KINGSTON 1176

1. IN A LETTER DATED MARCH 4 TO THE NATIONAL PLANNING AGENCY, (NPA), THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH (MOH) HAS WITHDRAWN ITS EARLIER REQUEST FOR 36 PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS FOR THE CORNWALL HEALTH PROGRAM. NPA DIRECTOR, NORMAL GIRVAN, HAS WRITTEN PEACE CORPS CONFIRMING CANCELLATION BUT EXPRESSING REGRET FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE. (PEACE CORPS JAMAICA HAS CABLED COMPLETE TEXT OF NPA LETTER, SEE REFTEL.) IN PARA THREE OF LETTER NPA STATES WITHDRAWAL OF REQUEST FOR VOLUNTEERS HAS NO EFFECT ON OTHER MOH OR GOJ REQUESTS FOR PEACE CORPS AND ASKS THAT PEACE CORPS PROCEED WITH REMAINDER OF REQUESTS ORIGINALLY PLANNED. IN THIS CONNECTION THE MOH HAS ASKED PEACE CORPS TO PROCEED WITH RECRUITMENT OF TWO NURSE TUTORS AND FIVE NUTRITIONISTS.

2. ON BASIS MOH LETTER TO NPA PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR HAS CANCELLED RECRUITMENT FOR 36 VOLUNTEERS WHICH WAS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN THIS WEEK AND HAS SO INFORMED NPA. CANCELLATION OF 36 IN EFFECT REDUCES THE 1977 PC PROGRAM BY ONE-THIRD.

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3. COMMENT: PRIOR RECEIPT OF COPY MOH LETTER TO NPA, PC DIRECTOR AND USAID AID AFFAIRS OFFICER CALLED ON MOH MANLEY, MARCH 3RD IN ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE ANY POSSIBLE MIS-UNDERSTANDING OVER P.C. ROLE IN CORNWALL HEALTH PROJECT. MANLEY INDICATED THAT SOME IN HIS MINISTRY HAD QUESTIONED THE ADVISABILITY OF USING P.C. IN SENSITIVE SUPERVISORY POSITIONS WITH C.H.A.S WHO WERE MOSTLY YOUNG AND UN-

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SPOHISTICATED PEOPLE. HE AGREED WITH VIEW THERE
IS POSSIBILITY OF FRICTION, AND ALTHOUGH HE HAD ASKED
HIS STAFF TO REVIEW THE MATTER, HE ALSO HAD IN THE MEANTIME
CONCURRED IN WITHDRAWAL REQUEST. WE UNDER-
STAND FROM IBRD BACKSTOP OFFICER FOR BANK LOAN 6.0 MILLION
FOR CORNWALL HEALTH PROJECT, WHO WAS HERE LAST WEEK, THAT
A SIMILAR CONTROVERSY HAS ARISEN OVER BANK PROJECT IN MOH.
IBRD OFFICIAL SAID DR. WINSTON DAVISON (NEW MOH PARLIAMENTARY
SECRETARY AND A PNP RADICAL, WAS ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL
STAFFERS IN MOH RAISING QUESTIONS OVER BANK PROJECT. DR
DAVISON WAS APPARENTLY ONE WHO QUESTIONED PC PARTICIPATION
IN CORNWALL HEALTH PROJECT AND IS REPORTED TO HAVE HISTORY
OF ANTI-PEACE CORPS ACTIVITY. SINCE TIMEING OF PEACE
CORPS WITHDRAWAL REQUEST (DURING FONMIN PATTERSON'S
WASHINGTONVISIT) COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE ILL-TIMED
FROM PERSPECTIVE THOSE JAMAICAN OFFICIALS WHO SEEK
IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE U.S., WE ARE DISINCLINED
TO BELIEVE MOVE HAD PRIME MINISTER'S OR CABINET'S
BLESSING OR EVEN KNOWLEDGE. MORE LIKELY THE REQUEST
WAS IN FACT TIMED BY RADICALS IN MINISTRY OF HEALTH
TO SABOTAGE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS, OR AT
BEST WAS A CONINCIDENTAL EFFORT BY RADICALS WHO SEEK
TO DISMANTLE PEACE CORPS PROGRAM IN JAMAICA. IT ALSO
UNDOUBTEDLY IS IN PART A FALL-OUT FROM INTERNAL
JOCKEYING FOR POWER BETWEEN MODERATES AND RADICALS
WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

4. THE NEXT TROUBLE AREA COULD BE THE MINISTRY OF
HEALTH AND SPORTS WHOSE MINISTER, HUGH SMALL, IS A
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LEADING RADICAL IN THE GOJ CABINET. IT IS POSSIBLE
THAT MINISTRY COULD CANCEL AN EXISTING REQUEST FOR
ELEVEN NEW VOLUNTEERS FOR PROJECTS UNDER THAT
MINISTRY'S JURISDICTION. SHOULD THIS SITUATION
EVENTUATE THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS IN JAMAICA
COULD FALL BELOW FIFTY AND THE VIAIBLITY OF THE
ENTIRE PROGRAM WOULD BE IN QUESTION. IN THE
CIRCUMSTANCES WE MUST SOON OBTAIN REAFFIRMATION OF
GOJ SUPPORT FOR PEACE CORPS IF OUR VOLUNTEERS ARE NOT
TO BE EXPOSED TO THE WHIMS OF VARIOUS RADICALS IN
SEVERAL DIFFERENT MINISTRIES. ON POSSIBLE APPROACH
IS A LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER SEEKING HIS FORMAL
SUPPORT AND REAFFIRMATIN THEREOF FOR PEACE CORPS.
THIS TACTIC AND THE GENERAL PROBLEM WILL BE DISCUSSED
BY THE AMBASSADOR WITH THE DEPARTMENT AND PEACE
CORPS WASHINGTON DURING HIS CONSULTATIONS PLANNED FOR
LATER THIS WEEK.
GERARD

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